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Soviet Arms Agreement

THE USSR ARMS THE THIRD WORLD Case Studies in Soviet Foreign Policy

Uri Ra'anan
(MIT, 256 pp., \$12.50)

ARMS FOR THE THIRD WORLD Soviet Military Aid Diplomacy

Wynfred Joshua and Stephen P. Gilbert
(Johns Hopkins, 169 pp., \$6.95)

Reviewed by George Thayer

The reviewer is the author of *The War Business*.

Serious books on the international trade in armaments are few enough in number, but fewest of all are those concerned with the growing Soviet military aid program. Thus, we should be thankful when two new and readable books come along that add to our limited understanding of this most important subject—even when one of them costs \$12.50.

Uri Ra'anan, professor of international politics at the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy, in this well-documented book, *The USSR Arms the Third World*, examines in detail the motivations of and political maneuverings behind two large weapons deals: the Soviet-Egyptian arms agreement of 1955 and the Soviet-Indonesian arms arrangements of 1957-65.

According to Ra'anan, the Egyptian transaction was agreed to in January, 1955 (not September of that year as currently supposed). The author argues that Nasser went to Washington in the spring of that year not to negotiate for American arms but to test Western reaction once the deal with Moscow became known. Soviet and Egyptian leaders were concerned that the West would seek to overthrow the government in much the same manner as the United States did in Guatemala a few months before. Nasser was also con-

vinced that an arms dialogue with the United States would not only soften up the expected vehement reaction but leave Washington feeling vaguely culpable (which, in effect, is what happened).

In contrast, the Soviet-Indonesian arms deal was entered into without either party sufficiently analyzing its objectives. Moscow armed the anti-Communist Indonesian Army which, in turn, alarmed the large and powerful Indonesian Communist Party, or PKI. The Soviets then provided weapons to the Air Force and Navy on the theory that these two reconstituted services would be pro-Moscow

and offset the Army's anti-Communist bias. None of this, however, kept Sukarno and the PKI from drifting in sympathy toward Peking, or the Army from revolting, kicking out Sukarno and using its Soviet weapons to destroy the PKI.

Arms for the Third World by Wynfred Joshua and Stephen P. Gilbert covers the broad spectrum of the entire Soviet arms offensive rather than limiting itself to specific case studies. Joshua is a specialist in political-military affairs for the Stanford Research Institute, and Gilbert is currently associate professor of government at Georgetown University.

The book, more than anything else, demolishes the notion that the Soviets provide arms for any one single reason. Arms are provided in most cases to promote Soviet power and prestige and to undercut the West, but they are also provided to acquire base and flyover rights, to further "wars of liberation" and to muddy the political waters. Sometimes arms are sold because Moscow wants the gold. Ideology, at the moment of truth, is seldom if ever the paramount reason for giving arms to a nation.

This book is marred by the fact that the authors accept the popular misconception that somehow Moscow turned the 1967 Egyptian defeat in the Six-Day War into "a major Soviet victory." More important, though, the authors draw

some of their material almost verbatim from at least one document they themselves helped write under contract to the U.S. government, yet which they do not feel obliged to acknowledge specifically (except for a vague passing remark in the preface) in either the footnotes or bibliography. The document in question is entitled "The Soviet Military Aid Program as a Reflection of Soviet Objectives," and is dated June 24, 1965. It is an unclassified Georgetown Research Project report written under contract to the Air Force Office of Scientific Research. Messrs. Joshua and Gilbert were two of the eight author-researchers.

Copies of this unclassified document have been extremely difficult to obtain ever since its publication. It appears that severely restricting the circulation of this report to a small clique of scholars and civil servants was from the beginning a conscious policy of both the government and research organization.

Two possible reasons come to mind. First, there exists an academic snobbery which equates a report's value in inverse proportion to the number of people who are allowed to read it. Second, there also exists a common conceit that first trade publishing rights to such public information belong solely to the original researchers themselves.

This point is raised only because our knowledge of Soviet military aid diplomacy is limited enough

without having additional information, both pertinent and unclassified (and compiled at taxpayer's expense), being denied general public circulation, in this specific case for nearly five years, particularly for what appear to be such unworthy reasons.

Thus, one comes away from this book with mixed feelings. There is no doubt that the work adds to our limited knowledge of the topic, yet one senses at the same time that the free flow of information between government and citizen has suffered still another blow. One is also fortified in his concern that the general public's understanding of any subject is rated at the bottom of any academic-bureaucratic scale of importance—even a subject as significant as the Soviet arms aid offensive.

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